

Please amend the abstract as follows:

~~--In order~~An apparatus and method to preferentially select code quantity from
DPCM path in a manner to satisfy the target code quantity ~~to thereby prevent~~ thereby preventing
deterioration of image quality. ~~either code~~ Code quantities obtained by a first compression
system of quantizing an input image signal by quantization steps different from each other, or
code quantities obtained by a second compression system which has compression factor and loss
which are lower than those of the first compression system are added on an encoding system
selection basis to ~~thereby calculate~~ a total code quantity of an equi-length unit. ~~to compare the~~ A
calculated total code quantity and a target code quantity in the equi-length unit are compared to
determine quantization step in the first compression system in accordance with the comparison
result to select, on the encoding system selection basis, the first compression system or the
second compression system of performing quantization by the determined quantization step.--